



## CAN HOMEWORK BE DANGEROUS?

By Carlynn McCormick

What value do students get from doing homework?

According to Kathy Seal, co-author of *Motivated Minds: Raising Children to Love Learning*, most homework does **not** advance the education of elementary school children. On the contrary, stuffing a great deal of information into their heads makes it harder to retain the data and can even damage their eagerness and joy of learning.

She claims, “*Research has shown decisively that when children study because they enjoy it, their learning is deeper, richer and longer-lasting.*”

Rather than giving students mounds of tedious homework, teachers would do better to formulate a common-sense approach that incorporates Seal’s findings. If homework is to be given it should be creative and intriguing, such as asking students to figure out a puzzle, or giving them an assignment to go outside and discover some science at work and write up their findings.

As educators and parents we should search out and use ideas that capture our children’s interests and ignite their imaginations.

Great success usually comes when we realize that children will easily learn those things they like and have great difficulty with those things they dislike. The graduate who *truly enjoys learning* is actually better prepared and in a far better position than one who has memorized the whole of his textbooks.

With this in mind, the goal of education should always be in the direction of helping children develop a deep love of learning. Any homework or teaching method that contributes to a love of learning is appropriate and acceptable.

To determine whether a particular piece of homework is “beneficial” or “dangerous,” try running it through this list of questions to see how it plays out:

- Is it interesting?
- Will students approach it with enthusiasm?
- Will it stretch their imagination?
- Will it get their creativity flowing?
- Is it something they will happily do?

If it answers up “no”, it is counter-productive to give it to students. If it answers up “yes” you have a winner!

There is no doubt that if every child went through school filled with wide-eyed wonder for the things he or she studies, we would have a world of geniuses.

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